

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAB-02 /054 W

-----070826 211939Z /43

O R 211900Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4230

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

UNCLAS PANAMA 7616

DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

USCINCSO FOR J-2 AND PAO

PANCALAL FOR IO

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SOPN, PN

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTIONS

1. PANAMA CITY.-- GENERAL TORRIJOS' THURSDAY EVENING "FIRESIDE CHAT" ON RADIO AND TV IS THE LEAD STORY IN ALL MORNING PAPERS OCTOBER 21. IN HIS HOUR-LONG INFORMAL RECORDED CHAT WITH TV-2 NEWS DIRECTOR MARIO VELASQUEZ, TORRIJOS SPOKE OF HIS TRIP TO EUROPE, HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, THE TREATY DEBATE AND THE FUTURE OF PANAMA. WHILE THE TALK WAS OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED TO WIN SUPPORT FOR THE TREATIES, HE DID NOT OPENLY EXHORT HIS VIEWERS TO VOTE "YES," CONCLUDING ON THE FOLLOWING NOTE: "I WOULD LIKE TO ASK OUR PEOPLE, NOW THAT WE ARE INTEGRATING THE ENTIRE NATION UNDER ONE FLAG, THAT WE ARE JUST A FEW DAYS AWAY FROM A RESOUNDING VICTORY FOR OUR CAUSE, I WOULD NOT LIKE TO LEAVE A TERRITORY UNDER ONE FLAG, UNDER ONE GEOGRAPHY, BUT WITH THE PANAMANIAN FAMILY DIVIDED."

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2. TORRIJOS DEDICATED SEVERAL MINUTES TO A NARRATION OF HIS VISIT WITH PRESIDENT CARTER DURING WHICH HE HD VELASQUEZ READ THE OCTOBER 14 JOINT STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING VERBATIM. HE SAID THAT HE WAS ADVISED NOT TO MEET WITH CARTER BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF BEING TRICKED INTO SIGNING SOMETHING IN DENIAL OF "EVERYTHING WE HAVE CONQUERED," HOWEVER HE PAID NO ATTENTION BECAUSE,

"WHEN I TALK WITH CARTER I AM AWARE THAT I AM WITH A MAN WHO HAS TURNED AWAY FROM INTERVENTION AND I AM WITH A MAN OF A DEEP MORAL CONVICTION."

3. TORRIJOS CONTINUED: "WE MET. WHAT HE PROPOSED TO ME WAS PERFECTLY SIGNABLE, BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO SIGN IT PRECISELY BECAUSE I AM REPRESENTING ONE MILLION SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND. I DID NOT WANT TO RAISE THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT ABOUT MY CONDUCT AND DID NOT WANT IT TO BE BELIEVED THAT THEY COULD, THROUGH DECEIT OR FLATTERY GET ME TO SIGN SOMETHING THAT OUR PEOPLE WOULD NOT ALLOW."

4. TORRIJOS ADDED THAT HE CONSIDERED HIMSELF AS CLEVER AS THE NEXT PERSON AND CONTINUED: "NEVERTHELESS I CAME, TALKED WITH HIM AND HE TOLD ME THE FOLLOWING VERY RESPECTFULLY; HE SPEAKS CONSIDERABLE SPANISH AND IF ONE TALKS TO HIM SLOWLY HE UNDERSTANDS." ACCORDING TO TORRIJOS, PRESIDENT CARTER THEN TOLD HIM THAT "ROMULO" AND "LINOWITZ" WERE CAUSING HARM BECAUSE WHAT THEY WERE SAYING "WAS NOT INTENDED IN WHAT WE SIGNED."

5. TORRIJOS THEN QUOTED PRESIDENT CARTER AS SAYING THAT THE U.S. HAD NOT INTENTION OF INTERRUPTING THE PEACEFUL LIFE OF PANAMA BUT THAT "WE WANT TO HAVE THE RIGHT WHEN THE CANAL IS ATTACKED OR THREATENED... TO SUPPORT YOUR PEOPLE SO THAT YOUR PRINCIPLE NATURAL RESOURCE IS NOT BLOCKED." "I THEN ANSWERED HIM," SAID TORRIJOS, "I ALSO UNDERSTAND IT THAT WAY. I THINK THAT
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YOU ARE OBLIGATED TO COME TO OUR DEFENSE WHEN OUR MILITARY CAPACITY IS NOT SUFFICIENT... WE DRAFTED A DECLARATION THAT HE PUT OUT UP THERE IN THE U.S. AND WE DID HERE... I COULD HAVE SIGNED IT AND SHOULD HAVE SIGNED IT BUT DIDN'T IN ORDER TO AVOID SUSPICION."

6. CONTINUING HIS ACCOUNT OF THE CARTER MEETING, TORRIJOS ADDED: "WE LEFT, WE WERE BOTH VERY SATISFIED. HE TOLD ME TO HAVE FAITH, THAT MORAL CAUSES PREVAIL. OUR CAUSE IS MORAL (CARTER SPEAKING) AND MY ATTITUDE IS MORAL TOO WHEN I HEAR A MORAL ATTITUDE. I KNOW I HAVE THE CAPACITY TO RAISE THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF MY PEOPLE, THE HISTORY THAT HAS BEEN DISTORTED FOR THEM... BUT THAT'S MY PROBLEM AND I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT I WILL RESOLVE IT." (FULL TEXT OF THE TV CHAT WAS CARRIED IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED CRITICA AND MATUTINO.) ITEM

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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Oct-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
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Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Litigation History:
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Subject: MEDIA REACTIONS
TAGS: SOPN, PN, (TORRIJOS HERRERA, OMAR)
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